

Alexander Carson, while rejecting the suggestion of change in *baptizo*, admits a development of meaning in *bapto*: "*Bapto*, to dip, comes naturally to signify to dye, from the frequency of dyeing by dipping." (p 92).

But whereas he admits to a development and expansion of meaning in the case of *bapto*, he refuses to admit any such possibility in the case of *baptizo*! If *bapto* first meant "to dip," then becomes "to dip in order to dye," then "to dye by dipping," and finally "to dye" regardless of how the dyeing was accomplished, could not *baptizo* first have meant "to immerse," then "to immerse in order to wash," then "to wash by immersion," and finally "to wash" regardless of how the washing was accomplished? And when we trace the word from the classical Greek through the Septuagint to the New Testament and discover from its usage in context that the word at first means "to immerse," then "to physically or ceremonially wash by immersion," then "to physically or ceremonially wash by some mode other than immersion," and then "to administer the ceremony of Christian Baptism," are we not led (not to say pressed) to the conviction that *baptizo* has undergone a development in meaning?

Historical Considerations

Mode of Old Testament ceremonial cleansings. As has been previously mentioned, no ceremonial cleansings by immersion are prescribed in the Old Testament. Most of the Old Testament ceremonies of purification were accomplished by some form of applying the purifying element to the object to be purified, with sprinkling as the prevailing mode. There are some cases in which clothes were to be washed as part of a ceremony. In such instances, the mode may indeed have been immersion. There are some cases in which the entire body was to be washed as part of a ceremony. This washing was accomplished by immersion in one instance (2 Kings 5:14) and could have been so in other instances. It was not accomplished by immersion in one instance (Lev 16:23-24) and was probably not so in many similar instances. This symbolism forms the background of the New Testament ceremony of cleansing.

Mode of Jewish proselyte baptisms. Baptism as a ceremony of cleansing was not new to John the Baptizer. Gentiles who desired to become Jews were called Proselytes, and were required to be circumcised, to be baptized, and to offer a sacrifice. This practice of "proselytizing" on the part of the Jews was witnessed to by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:15: